

2009 Biennium Monitored Goals and Objectives

The Legislative Finance Committee selected the following goals to monitor during the 2009 interim:

- Provide watershed (health) assistance to Conservation Districts and Watershed groups
  - Assist with the development, technical and financial assistance of watershed activities to address natural resource issues on a watershed basis
    - *General coordination of watershed grants define who is in the watershed and who is affected.*  
*Establish Partnership: Counties, Weed Board, with State Fish Wildlife and Parks, and Irrigation districts, federal agencies.*
  - Administer 15-20 watershed planning and assistance grants
    - *17 contracts have been signed from July, 2008 to December 31, 2008. There will be a few more contracts signed by June 30, 2009 Contract amounts are from \$4,000 to \$10,000*
  - Coordinate and participate in six watershed education events
    - *7 Education events, weed education, how to identify weeds, how to treat and spray weeds, how to work with the weed board education and clean-up to prevent fires, Education to prevent erosion.*
  - Conduct three stream assessments for stream inventories
    - *3 stream corridor assessments*  
*East Buffalo Creek – Fergus CD*  
*Maria River – Pondera, Toole, Liberty and Glacier, County CD's*  
*Yellowstone River eleven CD's*
  - Conduct training workshops
    - *6 workshops*  
*training to conduct a meeting, training to work with landowners, training for stream restoration*  
*training to identify weeds*

- Assist the Yellowstone River Conservation District Council and the Missouri River Conservation District Council carry out plans to improve and protect Montana's largest rivers
  - Secure federal assistance as needed to meet work plan goals
  - Identify four river improvement projects seek funding and implement them
  - Assist in administration efforts such as contracting, financing and project implementation to implement projects
  - Attend technical advisory meetings and other meetings as needed to work on the projects

**Missouri River Conservation Districts Council (MRCDC):** Activities conducted within this grant include:

- General coordination and administration of the Council.
- MRCDC coordination meetings are held quarterly.
- Worked with the Lower Missouri Coordinated Resource Management Group (LoMoCRM) to secure \$60,000 for LoMoCRM administrative funding from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- Worked with FSA, NRCS, and PPL Montana to ensure Montana's \$54 million CREP was amended to make it more "user-friendly" and put conservation practices on the ground on the Madison-Missouri rivers from the headwaters to the Fred Robinson Bridge.
- Secured three of the 28 basin-wide stakeholder seats on the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC) to provide input on recovery projects that could exceed \$3.7 million in FY09 for Montana projects, including initial studies of the Intake fish passage and Fort Peck flow modification projects. Additionally, MRRIC may have an impact on \$587,000 in FY09 funding for pallid sturgeon hatchery support and cottonwood forest management planning that will include Montana projects.
- Applied for, received, and helped implement a \$13,000 "Invasive Species with Volunteers" grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Funding was used to provide mobile weed wash stations at critical entry points along the CMR National Wildlife Refuge during hunting season. Funds were also used to provide car wash coupons to hunters staying in communities surrounding the Refuge.
- Partnered with the BLM on their \$50,000 Challenge Cost Share grant used to document the "homesteaders legacy" in the Monument area. The grant produces a professional documentary video, suitable for a 30-minute television program and installation of informational signs at homestead and other historic sites along the River in the Monument.
- Working with the Cascade County CD and the Whitmore Ravine Cooperative Conservation Committee to identify, fund, and implement a solution to the erosion of Whitmore Ravine into the Missouri River. Efforts have resulted in more than \$300,000 in federal funds invested to study the ravine's erosion and Malmstrom Air Force Base's stormwater system. Seven potential solutions have been proposed, the group is working to reach consensus on one solution while preparing to request a Congressional appropriation to fund the project.

- Control of noxious weeds spread by recreators and hunters (see Invasive Species with Volunteers weed wash project above). Over 200 vehicles were washed, and considering that vehicles driven through weed infestations can carry up to 2,000 weed seeds, the washes may have prevented as many as 400,000 new weed infestations.
- Partnered with landowners to remove 23,000 pounds of material, including 20 car bodies and 2 truck loads of trash, from the Missouri River near Great Falls. The site was later "adopted" by a group of local 7<sup>th</sup> Grade students as part of their "Lexus Eco-Challenge" project. The students installed erosion control matting, planted willow sprigs at the site, and are using the experience to motivate others schools to become active in riparian and wetland restoration activities.
- To draw attention and increase public awareness of the importance of allowing space between the water's edge and development, the Council is gathering and organizing historic flood photos along the Missouri River. The collection will be published and made available to the public. Additionally, historic high water markers will be placed at highly visible locations throughout the corridor to educate the public on where the water has been and where it might go in future run-off or flood events.
- Contracted and financed the "River Rendezvous", a public outreach event to announce the approval of key amendments to the CREP program. More than 30 landowners attended the event to learn more about how they might use the CREP to put conservation practices on the ground.
- Participate as an active member in the BLM Central Resource Advisory Council meetings to provide input on public land management along the Missouri River.
- Participate as an active member of the CMR National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning Team to develop a new management plan for the entire refuge over the next 15 years.
- Participate as an active member of the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC) to provide input on project implementation throughout the Missouri River basin, including more than \$5 million in FY09 project funding for Montana.

**Yellowstone River Conservation Districts Council (YRCDC):** Activities conducted within this grant include:

- General coordination and administration of the Council.
- YRCDC coordination meetings are held quarterly.
- In FY 2008 alone, leveraged into approximately \$750,000 in total grants, in-kind, and federal contributions.
- Conducted an Invasive plant inventory, Russian olive and Saltcedar demonstration projects and long-term riparian management strategies including outreach & education, reclamation, and monitoring.

- Authored Best Management Practices (BMP) & Position Papers on
  - Dornix Park position paper
  - Glendive By-Pass Chute position paper
  - Intake Diversion/Fish Passage position paper
  - Russian olive management BMP
  - Salt cedar management BMP
- Developed a 310-permit Google-Earth database which is a web-based application to facilitate the permitting process.
- Developed baseline geomorphic inventory which subdivides the river into reaches based on stream type.
- Developed Channel Migration Zone (CMZ) mapping. These county-level maps identify segments of the floodplain at risk of flooding and excessive erosion.
- Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) database – to store and display summarized results from of the CEA.
- Acquired High Resolution Orthophotography, LiDAR Topographic Data, Planimetric Feature Mapping which are used as key inputs into other aspects of the technical studies such as floodplain mapping and measuring historic channel change.
- Developed physical features mapping which identifies extents of bank armor and floodplain dikes.
- Conducted numerous demonstration Projects
  - Cottonwood Regeneration – demonstrated different methods of reestablishing cottonwood stands and documented the benefits associated with Cottonwood stand reestablishment.
  - Locke Creek Fish Passage – implemented minor modifications to a concrete culvert to facilitate passage of Yellowstone cutthroat trout while impeding passage of non-native rainbow trout.
  - Pryor Creek Fish Passage – an appraisal level design and estimate for construction of a siphon, grade control and fish passage and relocation of an inlet structure.
  - Richland Bendway Rock Weirs – evaluated alternative bank stabilization methods and materials suitable for the Yellowstone River in Eastern Montana.
  - Salt Cedar Mapping – a survey of salt cedar infestations and control efforts at six fishing access sites.
  - Salt Cedar & Russian Olive Pilot Project – established methods of control in two diverse counties.
  - Yellowstone River Clean-Up Project – during five days in July of 2007, we collected 18,320 pounds of trash, 91 tires, 5,506 aluminum cans, and 1,500 pounds of steel from over 551 miles of river bank.
- Conducted a number of Tours & Workshops throughout the watershed that included:
  - 310 Google Database workshop on it's usefulness as well as how to work within it.
  - Russian Olive Removal tour
  - T & Y Diversion Dam
  - Yellowstone River Rail Tour